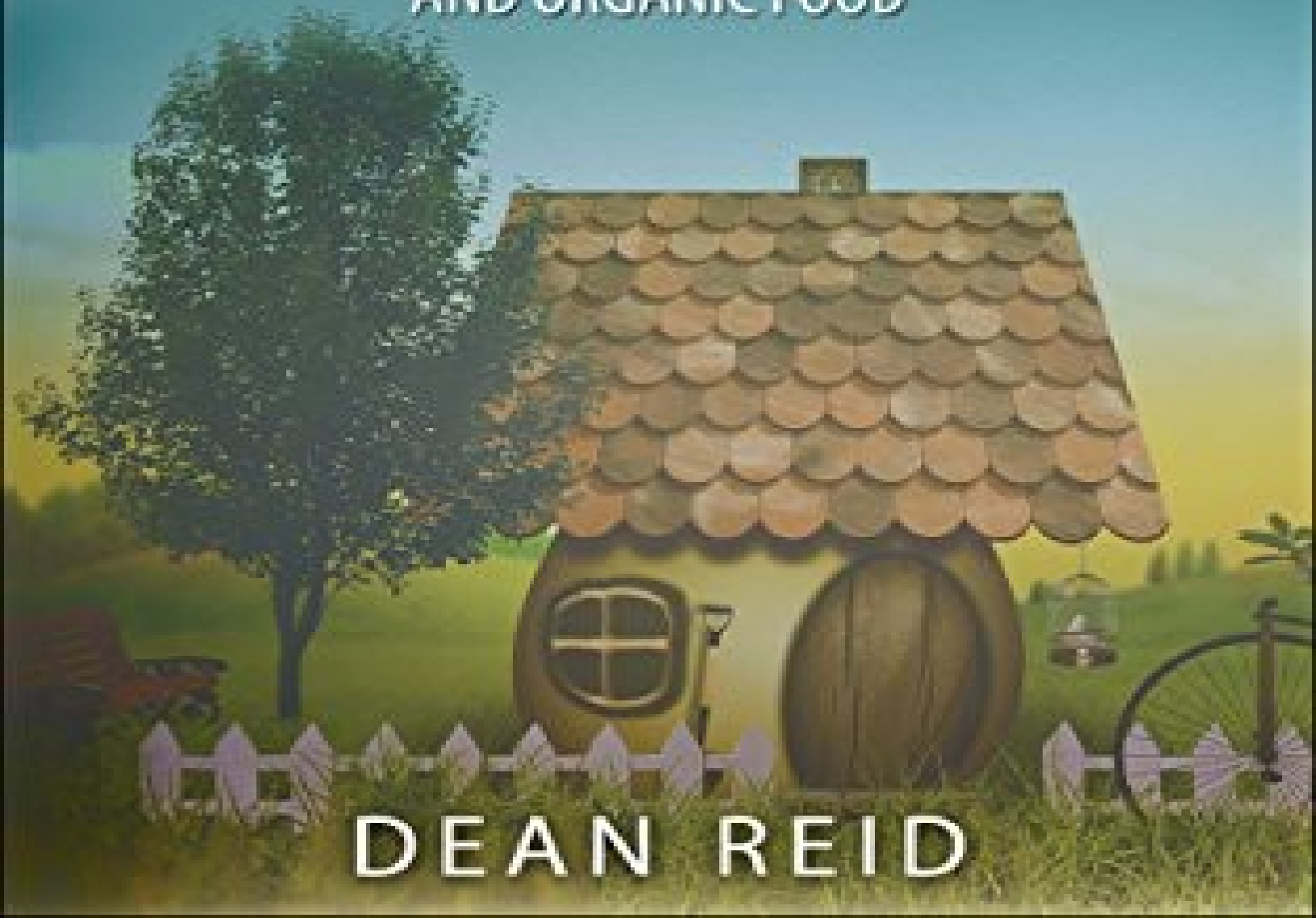
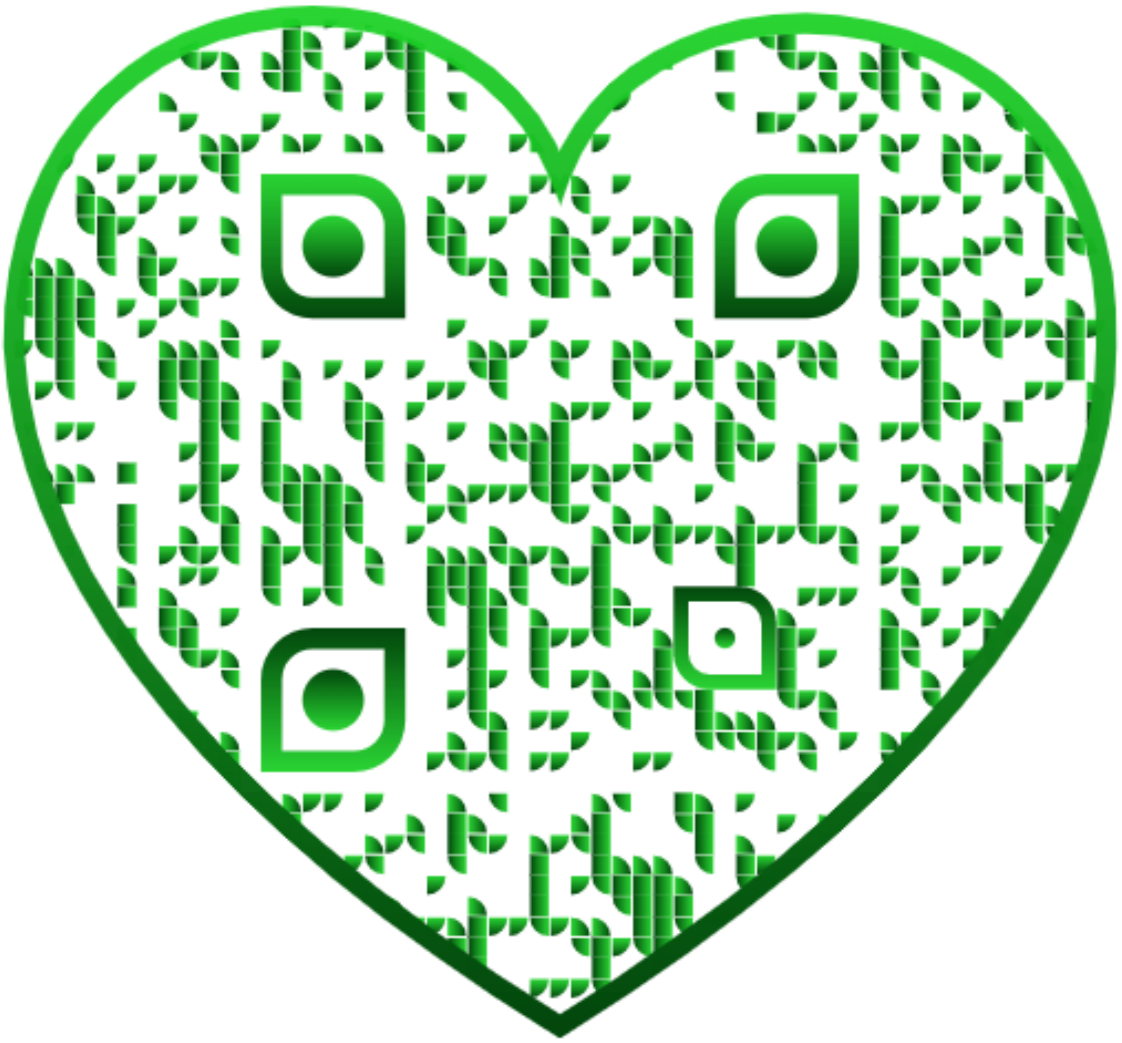
Mini Farming

HOW TO CREATE A SELF SUFFICIENT BACKYARD URBAN FARM BY GROWING YOUR OWN NATURAL AND ORGANIC FOOD



DEAN REID



MINI FARMING

How to Create a Self Sufficient Backyard Urban Farm By Growing Your Own Natural and Organic Food

Dean Reid

©2014

Table of Contents:

What is Mini Farming?
Maximize Your Space
Know Your Livestock Options
Know Your Plants
How to Use Bio-Intensive Gardening
Start a Routine
Use the Proper Soil
Plant in Season
Preemptive Strikes Against Pests
Control the Weeds
Preserve Your Food
A Brief Overview

What is Mini Farming?

Mini farming is farming on a small amount of land. This doesn't mean necessarily inside, but you can make sure of your indoor space. However, mini farming is usually a ¼ acre of land or more that is farmed for someone to be self-sufficient. It can be on smaller areas of land, though. A mini farm is essentially just a miniature farm.

However, mini farming is used for self-sufficiency, a feat that is hard even for a large farm. One acre of land is the recommended amount of land for miniature farming, as it is still considered to be small. With one acre of land, self-sufficiency is much more likely. Being self-sufficient means that everything you use should be grown on the land, from grain, to vegetables, to fruit.

You'll also need to learn food preservation techniques to ensure that self-sufficiency is maintained throughout the year, even during winter months where no food will be produced. Luckily, in today's day and age, if self-sufficiency fails there is a backup plan such as a grocery store, but with proper mini farming self-sufficiency won't be a problem.

If you mismanage your land, you will not be able to stay self-sufficient. However, mini farming also has some deal with animals. You'll need the manure from the animals to help fertilize your plants as well. Most of the animal can be used, and it can even turn a profit if you sell the skin or other parts to support your farm.

What Do You Need?

To run a mini farm you'll want to deal with animals and plants, as this will allow for you to be completely self-sufficient year round. Managing your farm properly is important, but having everything you need to start is just as important. You'll need to have the bulbs, seeds, or plants to start with your garden, for fruits, vegetables, and grain. You'll need processing materials as well as canning materials. A deep freezer is actually recommended if you're raising farm animals, as well as a milking cow or goat for your dairy.

Make sure you have the right containers, plants, and materials to start if you want your mini farm to be a self-sufficient success. So think about what types of plants you'll need, the materials you'll need to grow them, how you'll be able to reuse those materials, what you need to start and continue raise your livestock, as well as anything needed for food preservation. If you've answered all of these questions, you should have everything you need to start properly.

Knowing What's Right:

You can start a mini farm until you know everything you need to do so. This will require research, and this book is the starting point for it. Make sure that you know exactly what is important to start. Useful tools are also recommended, such as a farmer's almanac to know when to plant your food, as well as other books that may help to get you started on mini farming. This should include books on food preservation techniques.

Maximizing Your Space

Mini farming means that you need to be able to manage your space almost perfectly if you want to continue to be self-sufficient year round, and that means that you need to maximize the space you have. If you have land that is under one acre, this is crucial, but it’s important even for one acre or more. Using tools such as container gardening, racks, trellises, and making sure that you have the right plants to utilize your space in every possible manner.

Using Tools:

Using racks is important to helping you maximize your space. It's also important that you use items such as trellises, raised bed gardening, and containers whenever you can. By using these tools, it'll be easier to make sure that you are utilizing your space the max.

Raised bed gardening will help you to make patches that are designated to a certain type of plant. It'll also work for companion gardening, where plants are grouped that grow in similar conditions and can help each other. Trellises are also used to maximize your space, and container gardening will help as well. Hanging plants are also useful, but mini farming will also have traditional gardening mixed in.

Designated Areas:

Having designated areas for certain types of plants will allow you to take care of them more efficiently and easily. Make sure that you have everything labeled, as plants that are not fully grown look very similar in most cases. Many mini farmers use markers to tell where they planted which plants, and this allows for more of the plants to survive due to getting the proper attention.

Using the Right Plants:

Some plants produce more fruit or vegetables in a smaller amount of space. You'll want plants that produce more while taking less resources up, such as land and water. It's important to see which plants are best for you. With the use of trellises and racks, you'll be able to squeeze more plants into your mini farm.

This will allow you to grow fruits such as kiwis, grapes, and vegetables such as snap peas. These will grow up onto the trellises, giving you more space on the ground. Even melons can be grown on trellises if clothes are used to cradle the fruit. Below you'll find a few of the vegetables and fruits that will grow on trellises easily. Though, they aren't the only fruits and vegetables that are available.

VEGETABLES:

Scarlet Runner Beans
Squash
Pole Beans
Peppers

Fruits:

Grapes
Kiwis
Tomatoes
Blackberries
Raspberries
Blueberries
Cucumbers

Proper Irrigation:

Proper irrigation or other water source is also important when it comes to mini farming. Being self-sufficient means that you'll need a constant water supply. If you have a river or creek near your property, you should look into building a dam on the property, but you will have to research zoning laws and other stipulations.

Having a well will also help you to pump water naturally and self-sufficiently, allowing for you to maintain your crops. The water is usually good enough to drink, but there are ways to purify water if it isn't. Reusing grey water is also very important to self-sufficiency. Even with a pump or river on your property, most mini farmers will also collect and seal off rain water to use. Using a combination of water sources means that you'll always have enough water to maintain your farm and your home, and a proper irrigation system will put that water to great use with less effort on your part.

Knowing Your Livestock Options

To run a mini farm and be completely self-sufficient doing so, you'll need livestock unless you wish to be vegetarian or vegan. Livestock will give you the dairy you need, eggs, manure, and even a way to make money. Picking the right type of livestock is also important, though. It will all depend on how many acres of land you have. If you have up to five acres of land, which still constitutes mini farming, you'll have a wider range of livestock option. However, if you have an acre of land or less, it is important that you pick your livestock carefully, and it's unlikely that you'll be able to handle a large variety.

Types of Livestock:

Cattle: Cattle is great for producing milk, manure, and hides, as well as meat. However, cattle requires a large amount of space, as they eat a lot and require room to roam. Cattle takes more attention to raise as livestock than other options.

Goats: Goats can also be used for milk and manure, but they require a large bit of room to rise. They require more attention than other animals, making them an unpopular but not impossible option for livestock on a mini farm.

Pigs: Pigs are easy to raise, as they can eat most things, except for raw potato. Pigs need a pen, but they're considered relatively easy to raise, so they're a popular option for mini farming. You can use pigs for manure, but pigs do not produce hide. You can eat most parts of the pig.

Chickens: Chickens are a popular option for mini farming. A coop will be required to keep chickens, and if you want the eggs fertilized a rooster is a must. Chicken feed is relatively easy to make, and they're easy to take care of. Chickens can be used to produce a type of manure, the feathers are usually able to be sold, and the eggs are useful.

Rabbits: Rabbits are a popular option for mini farming, as they're considered to be easy to take care of. Rabbits breed easily, so keeping enough on hand is easy.

Frogs: Many people don't think that frogs are able to be used as a source of meat, but they can be. Frog legs are popular to be sold in stores. Mini farming does mean that you'll usually use strange types of meat to stay self-sufficient. Frogs should not be used as your only source of meat.

Fish: it is possible to raise fish, but raising enough to stay self-sufficient isn't likely. You'll need a pond, either natural or manmade, to be able to raise fish properly.

What Else Livestock Can Give You:

Running a mini-farm doesn't mean that you shouldn't sell something to have another bit of cash on your hands, but most mini farmers cannot have another job. However, livestock can give you a source of income if you choose wisely. With the right materials you can sell hides, rabbit feet, feathers, and manure. Most mini farmers will advertise in the local paper, on websites, or on their own website online. With the right tanning solution, if you raise animal such as rabbits or cattle you'll be able to use the hides and sell them. Chicken feathers are also popular to sell. When choosing your livestock, you should consider everything that the particular animal has to offer you. A combination is often used so that you have more than one type of meat, and rabbits are often coupled with other types of livestock because it is easy to sell the hides.

Knowing Your Plants

Choosing your plants is just as important as choosing your livestock. You'll want to choose plants that are great for compact farming. A plant that doesn't take up a lot of your space will leave you more space so that you'll be kept with a variety year round. Below you'll find what plants are best for raised beds, trellises, hanging plants, and even the essential plants you'll need to keep your mini farm running with a full range of nutritional fruits, vegetables, and wheat or starch to eat. There is no reason for you to skip out of eating certain things due to mini farming.

Plants for Raised Beds:

Raised bed gardening makes it easier to replace the soil. This is like normal planting, but it it’s on a raised bed due to manure, fertilization, and replaced soil which makes it easier. It also extends the growing season by raising the temperature due to the boxes around the raised beds. It raises the temperature about ten degrees, which allow for a higher yield due to the longer season. To further extend the season, cover the raised beds with an inexpensive frame or plastic sheet. This will also raise the temperature, allowing for you to grow plants even through January, depending on the crop. This allows for you to produce more crops, making it easier to maintain self-sufficiency.

In raised bed gardening it is also best to plant your crops closer together, as it will decrease the need for weeding. With the plants growing closer together, there isn’t as much room for the various weeds that could infiltrate your rows.

Since raised bed gardening is a way to extend your growing season, it allows for self-sufficiency at a much more efficient and easier pace. This means that you’ll have fresh crops for longer, but food preservation is still important. This method should be coupled with other farming methods.

Plants for Trellises:

Trellises are also important for mini farming, since it allows for your plants to grow up instead of over the land. This means that you won't have to worry about the amount of space you're using. Most mini farmers will use trellises to grow melons or even vegetables on trellises.

If you do decide to grow melons or other heavy fruit on trellises, it is important that you have cloth that you can wrap around the fruit so that it cradles it and doesn't fall off the vine as it gets bigger. This will help to support it. Growing most of your fruits on trellises will allow you to use more of you land towards vegetables and livestock, making it a great way to utilize your space.

Hanging Plants:

Hanging plants are also essential to mini farming. These can be around your home or any building that is in the area you own. Hang them on all the sides of your homes, while spacing them close together. This will allow you to grow in the air as well as the side of the building, maximizing your space. These plants will also take about the same amount of sunlight as those growing under them, so you'll know how to properly take care of them without much hassle, which will in turn produce a large yield.

Other Essential Plants:

Grains are essential to mini farming and being self-sufficient. Grain is needed, as you need the nutrition it has to offer, and it can be ground down to make meal, flour, and that will allow you to make bread and other essential foods. From corn, to wheat, to amaranth, which is a seed that is high in nutritional value and easy to grow, it’s important that these plants are grown on your mini farm. There are other grains that are easier to grow than wheat, and looking into what those are may be useful. Many mini farmers will grow various types of grain which can be used for your pallet while taking less effort to grow.

You may also want lots for cabbage or other vegetables that need more room on the ground. These will be needed

How to Use Bio-intensive Gardening:

Bio-intensive gardening is a way to increase your yield and maximize your space, making it perfect for mini farming. It produces a proven higher yield than other farming methods, and with other techniques combined it can help to even extend the growing season. Bio-intensive gardening will help you to maintain self-sufficiency by having more food to preserve for months where fresh crops will not be a possibility.

Bio-intensive gardening is meant for long-term sustainability. Bio-intensive gardening also doesn’t strip the soil, making it easier to grow crops again the next year, and it includes a way to collect seeds so that your garden will begin self-sufficiently in the next growing season.

Companion Planting:

Companion planting will help your plants to yield more by allowing the plants in patches to help each other grow. Some plants are too aggressive for companion planting, meaning that you cannot use companion planting for every plant you plan to grow. Companion planting will attract various insects that will help your plants grow while deterring pests that can be detrimental to your crops. However that doesn't mean that organic pest control should not be used.

Putting water bowls by your companion planting sections will also increase your chances of helpful insects taking host in your planting areas. These insects usually prey on the insects that would harm your plants, so pest control won't be as big of an issue. It'll also help to pollinate your plants so that they produce the fruits and vegetables required for mini farming. With companion planting, you may want to even plant flowers that will attract helpful insects.

Open-pollinated Seeds:

With open-pollinated seeds it means that you save the seeds that you used for bio-intensive farming, especially from the plants that did well. These seeds are then used in the next growing season. The fresh seeds that you collect will make it more likely that each seed that you plant in the next growing season will produce a plant that survives. This will also increase your yield.

This way you won't have to depend on seed vendors, whether they be large or small, allowing for complete self-sufficiency. With only a small area designated to seeds, you should be able to get enough to grow all of next year's needed seeds. However, this does mean that you need to have an area designated for seed collection.

Intensive Planting:

Mini farming means that you need to use every bit of space that you have, so that self-sufficiency won't be a problem. This is what intensive planting is used for. Intensive planting will require you to either plant or transplant seeds or seedlings in close proximity to each other. By doing this you create an uninterrupted root, which will allow for a higher yield. However, for intensive planting to work there has to be a pattern. Off-set planting is recommended, where each row is shifted down by one. This way you don't have the leaves of each plant touching as they mature. This means that the plants will not compete for sunlight or water.

Deep Soil Preparation:

Soil and soil structure are important to keep your plants growing strong. The soil will need to be loosened at a depth of sixty centimeters. Water and air should be able to be move freely throughout the soil, allowing for maximum growth. It will also make room for plant roots and soil organisms that will help to enhance the soil over time.

This will also make sure that the crops carry more nutrients, making it even healthier. Compact soil won’t hold water as well as aerated soil, making it important that aerated soil is used for your plants. This way water won’t be wasted, and your maintenance of your mini garden becomes easier. Root penetration is also optimized which enhances growth and minimized erosion.

COMPOSTING:

There are different types of fertilizers that will be needed to help maximize your yield on a mini farm, increasing the likelihood of self-sufficiency. Bio-intensive composting allows for this to become possible. With bio-intensive composting liquid fertilizer, solid fertilizer, and effective micro-organisms can be produced. All of these fertilizers are completely organic as well. It also helps you to recycle and eliminate waste on your mini farm.

Effective Micro-organisms: These are produced by shrimp paste, banana tree trunks, sugar, yeast and water. When mixed into the soil it helps your plants to grow.

Liquid Fertilizer: Liquid fertilizer will help your plants throughout the growing season, and it's very easy to use. Your livestock is helpful when it comes to making liquid fertilizer, as livestock urine can be used. With rabbits or other small animals, collecting it is easy. Natural sugars, boiled ginger water, and other materials can be used.

Solid Fertilizer: Solid fertilizer is very important to any farming experience. Manure from your livestock can be used as well as compost from food that is rotting, or even parts of the plants that you don't eat. Fallen leaves or trimmings can be added to your compost to create solid fertilizer.

Bio-intensive gardening is very important to mini farming, as it's the best way to utilize the land you have. With these techniques your yield is increased, your growing season lessened, and you'll be more prepared for next year's planting season.

Start a Routine:

Starting a routine is just as important as knowing what plants to plant on your mini farm. If you aren't in a routine, it's more likely that your plants will not get the attention they need, and that will decrease the yield for that planting season. It is important that the yield each plant gives is high, as you'll need enough crops to be produced to sustain you and your family year round.

Know the Amount:

Not every crop will be taken care of the same. Some plants will require more water than others, and some plants won't be able to handle the same amount of sun as others. It is important that you know your plants and the amount of sun and water to give them. Some plants will even require to be fertilized on a regular basis to keep their yield high. This is why bio-intensive composting is useful.

Keep a routine on when you water your plants. Without it, a plant can die from overwatering or under watering. If you overwater a plant, even if it doesn't die the yield will be reduced, and this goes for overwatering a plant as well. Having a list of when you should water each patch or types of plants will help you to keep a schedule on watering.

Research will be required on the amount of sun each plant can take. Mini farmers have to take into consideration that plants that say they require full sun do not always require what most people to consider full sun, and plants should always be watched to make sure that their leaves do not begin to burn. A routine will help you to check on your plants to see if they're growing in the right conditions or if any problems arise.

TRIMMING:

Certain plants will need to be trimmed, such as fruit trees or bushes. Even hanging plants may need dead leaves picked out or even dead blossoms so that their yield rises. A routine for trimming and such should be written down as well. When a plant is not trimmed regularly it will not grow as quickly or strongly. The dead leaves and blossoms will also need to be taken out on a regular basis so that new blossoms that will produce a vegetable or fruit will replace it.

Save Seeds:

Seeds need to be saved at a certain time because if they fall on the ground they aren’t likely to produce as well. You need to write down around the time you planted the plants and what time you should be harvesting the seeds from each. This is easier when you have a routine set up, and you won’t be as wasteful. Seeds are important to next year’s crop, and being self-sufficient means that you shouldn’t rely on seed vendors.

Write it Down:

A routine is hard to establish at first, and if you break it then it’s useless. Writing a routine down is helpful to make sure that a routine is maintained. Having your routine posted makes it even more likely to work out. Producing a high yield is the only way to stay self-sufficient, so a routine is essential.

Use the Proper Soil

Your mini farm will not be successful without the proper soil. Soil is important to your plant’s yield and growth. Managing your soil will allow you to manage your plants, producing a higher yield when done right. This is important to mini farming because if you have plots of land that in your space that are not productive for proper growth and high yield, then you are essentially wasting that bit of land. The soil should either be enhanced or replaced.

Basic Soil:

There are three types of basic soil, and the first step to soil management is knowing what type of soil you have. These soils are best if they're enhanced, but some will need to be replaced entirely.

Clay: Clay is not productive to mini farming, as it is too hard for the roots of the plant to break through and does not hold essential nutrients. Some crops can benefit from a little bit of clay, but it is important that the amount of clay is limited, as it holds a lot of water. This will often lead to overwatering.

Loam: Loam can be enhanced, but it's fine as is. Loam is a great soil for mini farming, and all that usually needs to be added is fertilizer at certain times. The nutrients in loam will provide you with a high yield and nutritious crop.

Sand: Sand will need to be replaced entirely, as it is not good for mini farming. Sand doesn't hold water at all, leading to underwater. There is also no nutrients in sand.

Soil Testing:

Getting your soil tested will ensure that you get the best soil for your crops, and it will help you to make sure that your soil holds the nutrients that are essential to your crops. When soil is lacking certain nutrients it will suffer because of it, but knowing what it is lacking provides an opportunity to put it into the soil with different types of fertilizer or compost. Though, being self-sufficient, buying a startup kit is usually recommended, or you can get it tested at the start. It’ll help with self-sufficiency later on.

The soil will be tested for various nutrients. Some of them include:

Potassium
Magnesium
Lime Requirement
pH Levels
Manganese
Zinc

Know What You Need:

Different crops will need different nutrients in the soil to produce a high yield or even to grow. If you are lacking certain nutrients, you may still be able to grow certain crops, especially if you can’t put that nutrient back in. mini farming is dependent on you knowing the information to maintain your farm. It is best to do research on the types of crops that you’ll be growing, and this research should include soil conditions that help them to produce a higher yield and grow healthily.

What to Look Out For:

There are things that you want to be present in your soil, but that also means that are things that you just don’t want to be present in your soil. A majority of these things are certain types of insects that are harmful to your plants. The best way to manage this is to rotate your crops, and this will also help to re-fertilize your soil after a planting season has taken out some of the vital nutrients needed.

Cover Crops:

Cover crops are also important, but you won't be able to use them as much as a mini farmer, as you won't have the time for them to grown and put nutrients back into the soil as often. However, making room and time for cover crops is essential to soil management. These are crops that you will plant when your primary crop is no longer being grown. Cover crops are not for harvesting.

Cover crops benefit the soil in many ways. They help keep down the erosion of your soil, which is essential to mini gardening. It also improves the nutrients and quality of the soil, making the soil better when you plant your actual crops again. Weeds are suppressed when cover crops are being grown, making less work for the next planting season. It will also help to keep down pests that would harm your actual crops.

Plant in Season

Production efficiency is need for any mini farming. Making the most of the time that you can put a crop on the field is important, as it will ensure a higher yield. Planting late in the season will reduce the chances of a high yield or even growth entirely. If you do get your plants to grow, you may have a harder time keeping them healthy, also meaning that your yield is lowered. Planting in the proper seasons and weather conditions is essential to sustaining self-efficiency with mini farming.

Planting Early:

Planting as much as you can in the earliest part of the season is important, but many mini farmers do not think that you should plant all at once. Even though the majority of your crop should be planted as soon as the season and weather conditions allow, you don’t want to put all your eggs in one basket so to speak. There are dangers to planting too early in the season, but these dangers can be minimized.

There is such a thing as too early, and even if the season has started, if the weather conditions are not proper, then you should not plant. Losing crops will damage your yield as a mini farmer just as much as planting too late in the season, if not more. Cold weather stress on a plant will require it to struggle to grow or even die completely, this is lessened by raised bed gardening. Planting too late will also cause problems, as the plants will not have time to grow and produce properly. It’s a balancing act that any mini farmer will need to learn.

VARIETIES:

Learning the varieties of the plants that you will be planting is important, as having a crop with more than one variety of seed available to you will be helpful. This should be done at your startup, and seeds can be harvested from there. Different varieties of plants require different conditions, and some respond better to early planting. Picking a variety that responds to early planting will increase the yield of your crops on a mini farm. Sticking with a type of plant that can handle colder weather easily will help to keep your mini farm producing longer.

Succession Planting:

To maximize a farm's yield, succession planting is a useful tool that many mini farmers use. However, to do this properly a succession plan will need to be created, as a lot of research goes into when you can plant a crop. This also means that whatever you choose to succeed the crop that was their previously has to grow well in similar soil conditions. When you plant your succession crop, you'll want to add fertilizer as well as aerate the soil. Since it is important that the soil remains nutritious so that the next crop's yield is high.

Doubling up the crop that you plant with succession planting can also be helpful. More than one crop can share the same space, and it will utilize everything that you can in the soil that is already there. Mix plants that have a complimenting growth pattern. Such as plants that have a long root should be planted besides plants that have a short root, as it will maximize your yield.

Harvest in Time:

Harvesting when it’s time is also useful when it comes to producing the best yield on your mini farm. If a plant rots on the crop, then that is one crop that cannot be used. Wheat, once it touches the ground, is too infested with pests to eat. Everything needs to be harvested on time so that another fruit or vegetable can take its place.

A vegetable or fruit that is rotting but still somewhat alive is taking up nutrients as well as the stalk that it’s on. These nutrients can be used for a new yield or cycle. Pay attention o when your fruits and vegetables are ready to be harvested, as the quicker you can get them in is the quicker a new vegetable or fruit can take its place.

Preemptive Strikes Against Pests

A preemptive strike against pests is required for a high yield when it comes to mini farming. However, there is no restriction on pesticides when it comes to mini farming. The type of pest control used is up to the farmer, but inorganic pest control and pesticides have been known to reduce the yield, but it does make maintaining your crops easier. There are tons of pesticides on the market, but below you'll find methods for organic pest control.

Row Covers:

Row covers are great when trying to reduce the amount of pests that are mobile. This includes potato beetles, aphids, cabbage moths, and many more harmful insects. You can get floating row covers that are sold by the yard, allowing for you to buy it cheaply at your startup of mini farming, and they can even be made for anyone who is into do-it-yourself projects.

Row covers do not damage the amount of light that can get through significantly, as it lets up to eighty percent of the light in. This keeps row covers from damaging your crop’s yield. Row covers actually trap heat as well, increasing the planting season’s time. It is critical that row covers are used when the plants are seedlings as well.

Pheromone Traps:

For mini farming, pheromone traps are not common, as they cannot be maintained self-sufficiently. However, if you’re having a hard time getting your mini farm started on the first year, it’s okay to use them. Pheromone traps lure a particular type of harmful insect into a trap so that they won’t be able to harm your plants.

Sticky Traps:

These traps can be made by hand, so they're compatible with a self-sufficient environment. All you need is a rigid material to start. Painting the trap certain colors may be helpful as well, as some pests are attracted to colors. Cover the material with plastic wrap, so that the backing is easy to reuse. Then cover the plastic wrap with a sticky substance. These sticky substances can be made by hand, but it should not be have any sort of sugar base. This will catch the bugs, and it should be replaced frequently.

Oil Sprays:

Oil sprays are organic, and they suffocate the pests. However, it is only effective when it hits the pest directly. Lighter oils can be used, but they are not recommended, as they can harm the plants and aren’t nearly as effective. A plant should not be sprayed if it is suffering from moisture stress, as it will harm and might even kill the plant in question.

Limit the area you spray to smaller areas, and only spray where you see pests. Spraying the entire plant can be detrimental to your yield. Oil sprays can be made at home, and there are many recipes available in various organic farming books or even all over the internet.

Soap & Water:

A traditional organic pest control method is to just fill a spray bottle with a little soap and water solution. Spraying this over the plants won't harm them. However, it is important to do so in the morning before the sun is too high in the sky, as you don't want the leaves of your plants to burn up. Soapy water will kill and deter pests.

Control the Weeds

Controlling weeds is very important to mini farming. Since mini farming means that there is a small space to begin with it means that the nutrients in your soil are very important. Weeds take up space and eat at the nutrients that your crops need to produce a high yield or grow entirely. There is nothing saying that weed control cannot be taken care of inorganically, but organic methods are more commonly used for mini farming. Below you'll find some organic methods for controlling the weeds on your mini farm.

MULCH:

The light can’t reach weeds when mulch is over your crops, and this will keep the weeds from growing. However, mulch should not be added until your crops begin to grow, as mulch will also damage seedlings. With mulch involved it doesn’t mean that it’s impossible for weeds to grow, but the weeds that do grow will be shallowly rooted. A shallowly rooted weed will be easy to pull.

Mulch is easily made, and can be completely organic. Mulch can even be made of grass clippings. Shredded bark can also be used for mulch. Newspaper can also be used, so it’s easy to make a mulch out of recycled materials. Cardboard can also be used.

Hand Pulling:

Weeds can be pulled out by hand as well, and this is easy to do when weeds are small. If you are going to pull weeds out by hand, you'll want to pull them out while they're still small. If the weed is small, its root is not as far in, and it can be pulled easier. This is important to a hand pulling method. A hand pulling method usually isn't enough on its own, but it's very helpful when it comes to keeping your weeds under control in an organic way.

Corn Gluten Meal:

If you produce corn on your mini farm, a corn gluten meal can be used to suppress the growth of weeds. However, this will only kill and suppress weeds at the sprouting stage, so it’s important that this method is used early on. Corn gluten meal will also kill seedlings, so it should not be used when you are just starting out with your crop. It should only be used when all of your crops in the area are past the seedling stage.

Use a Hoe:

With mini farming you can use a hoe to cut the roots of the weeds, and this will kill them, and it’s considered a rather easy method. This is the best method against annual weeds whose roots remain below the surface waiting to re-sprout. This will also help to aerate the soil, making it easier for your crops to grow and for helpful microorganisms to move through the soil.

Crowding:

Crowding is a great way to suffocate weeds, as they won't have room to grow. The closer together your plants are, the less weeds you'll have to deal with. This is why planting patterns are very important to mini farming. Make sure that plants are still a safe distance apart, as you do not want to suffocate your own crops. Companion planting is often used for this method, as it will allow you to grow different plants closer together due to different needs, leaving no room for weeds to grow.

SHEETS:

Putting something over the area when you do not have a crop growing, while you're between planting seasons, will decrease the amount of weeding that you have to do before you plant more crops in the next planting season. It is usually considered to be best if it's a black or dark colored sheet, and this way it will properly block out the sun and suffocate anything that is trying to grow.

Boiling Water:

Boiling water has been known to kill weeds, but it will also kill your crops. Only use boiling water before you plant, so that your crops are not killed in the process. This should clear out the area, and you can pick out any remaining weeds by hand. The boiling water will shrivel up the weeds, killing them within the day.

SALT:

Salt can also help to kill weeds, as it also shrivels them. Table salt can be used, but you can also boil your own salt water, keeping it self-sufficient if you live near the ocean. However, salt should be used sparingly as a weed killer, as it can leave the ground barren, it is usually best to be sprinkled around the edge of the allotted space to act as a barrier to any weeds, stopping them in their tracks.

How to Preserve Your Food:

Food preservation is important if you want to maintain self-sufficiency on a mini farm. Even when extending the planting season, it is nearly impossible to grow year crops year round. There are different methods of food preservation that are helpful when it comes to mini farming.

Types of Food Preservation:

Drying:

Drying is where you dry out a piece of meat until there is no moisture left. Contrary to popular belief, there are techniques that do not require a special machine to dry out your meats. It's a great way to preserve meats for the winter months. These meats can then be rehydrated, and are often used in stews during winter. However, you can also dry out fruits and vegetables, making it a valuable food preservation method. The drying method is even used for keeping grain year round.

Freezing:

Freezing is a relatively easy method, and it can be done with any deep freezer. Anyone who is going to invest in a self-sufficient mini farm should invest in a deep freezer. It's a great way to freeze fruits, vegetables, and meats. However, it is not considered to be a popular method for mini farming. What most people don't know is that grains can actually be frozen and then thawed later.

Curing:

Curing is primarily used for meats. Curing would be where you place the meat or vegetables into a salt container, and make sure that salt fills the area completely and it does not touch any other items of food. It'll dry out the entirety of the meat in question. The food that is preserved through dry salting should then be stored in airtight containers.

Smoking:

Smoking meat is another curing process which preserves meat while also adding flavor. Smoking acts as a drying agent. This will not keep the food good for a month, but smoked meats can last up to two weeks in the fridge,

and it is a way to temporarily preserve food. Smoked meats are more resistant to bacteria.

Fermenting:

Fermenting is a food preservation method. However, it is not a popular one. Grains, meat, fruits, and vegetables can be fermented. For example, fermenting grapes will make wine. This is a great way to get rid of excess grapes that will go bad if not used. When cabbage is fermented you get sauerkraut. Fermentation uses yeast to produce alcohol. The alcohol that is produced will then kill any bacteria trying to spoil the food.

Canning:

Canning is where you heat the vegetable, fruit, or meat up to a certain temperature. Then you vacuum seal the product in glass jars or cans. Canning is a process that can be done at home, but the required equipment is necessary. Sealable jars or cans are required, and most people who can at home have to use glass jars because they’re reusable.

Pickling:

Picking is another food preservation method used by many mini farmers. Pickling is where the food in question is soaked in a solution using salt, alcohol or acid. The acid required can be found in vinegar. Pickling can also use a salt water brine solution.

Without food preservation, a mini farm cannot be truly self-sufficient, as you would not have food for winter months where crops are impossible to grow. There are ways to store your excess food, but mini farmers have to consider that excess food is needed, and to be self-sufficient on a mini farm you have to be able to grow more food than you can actually eat at one time. Food preservation should be done throughout the entire growing season.

A Brief Overview

Mini farming isn’t an easy task, and making a mini farm self-sufficient is even harder. However, the task isn’t impossible. A mini farm is a farm that is under five acres of land, usually one acre or less. The larger the plot of land, the easier it will to become self-sufficient on it.

What You Need:

To become self-sufficient on a mini farm you'll need food preservation equipment, the proper soil, vegetables, fruits, grain of some kind, livestock, and usually a way to make money from home. As a mini farmer, keeping another job is nearly impossible. There are ways to extend the growing season, such as raised bed gardening and floating row covers, and these are considered a necessity by most mini farmers. Extending your growing seasons means there will be less months that you have to rely on preserved food.

To Get Started:

To get started on mini farming the soil needs to be checked, especially for bio-intensive gardening, which will produce a higher yield than other forms of mini farming. Make sure that soil preparation is at the top of your priorities if you wish to start a mini farm. The soil needs to be loosened, aerated, and be checked for minerals. Remember that loam soil is the preference of any mini farmer, and that there are ways to add nutrients back into the soil. Seeds will also need to be bought, but after the first growing season seeds can be naturally collected and saved, starting your self-sufficiency.

A routine will also need to be established, as running a mini farm requires a lot of maintence, as well as livestock will need to be bought and houses. For example, if you'll be raising rabbits you'll want to build hutches, and if you're going to raise chickens, you'll need a coop. Each category of livestock will require different preparations, but to allow for your mini farm to run smoothly, it is important that the preparation is done beforehand.

Research is also needed, as not every fruit, vegetable, or grain can be planted at the same time. A farmer's almanac is highly recommended when it comes to starting a mini farm, as it'll provide the information needed to find a planting schedule. Succession planting should also be taken into consideration, so that you take full advantage of the growing season. A higher yield means it is easier to stay self-sufficient year round.

What You Need Knowledge Of:

A mini farmer needs extensive knowledge on certain subjects to keep their farm running smoothly, and this includes how to raise and care for livestock. It even may include the butchering process, as killing an animal humanely is very important. Knowing what parts of the animal you can save is also very important, and it's often how mini farmers make their money.

You'll need to know local zoning and water laws, as having an alternative source of water on your property as well as a proper irrigation system is very important when it comes to mini farming. Without the amount of water needed to grow the crops sufficiently, yield will be significantly lowered.

Knowledge of the planting season and the seeds you have is also important to a mini farmer. Not everything can be planted at the same time, and there are ways to get the most out of your land. Using techniques such as companion planting, succession planting, and planting patterns will help you to utilize the small space of land you have as much as you can. Knowing the different ways to utilize the land is also important, such as trellises, hanging plants, raised bed gardening, and even container gardening which can become useful.

Knowledge of the soil types is also important because if a mini farmer starts out with bad soil they will experience a bad crop. A bad crop can ruin a mini farm, and it will ruin self-sufficiency. A mini farmer should also know food preservation skills, as preserving food is essential to sustain self-sufficiency through the winter months.

Weeds and pests can become a problem, so as a mini farmer it is important to know methods to take care of them that won't damage your crop. These usually include organic methods, which are numerous and easy to find. However, getting the materials for organic methods of weed and pest control is a skill on its own, and should be looked into before a mini farm is started.

What most people don’t realize is that marketing is also important to a mini farmer, as a source of income is still required. This means that you’ll want to market whatever you’re selling, such as hides, rabbit’s feet, manure, compost, or feathers. There are countless things that a mini farmer can sell for a source of income, but it will only work if they know how to market their product.

WHY MINI FARMING?

Mini farming is a great way to stay self-sufficient, where you won't need to rely on others for your food. It's considered to be rewarding in its own way, and it's a way to enjoy life on your own terms. Even though it's a lot of work, it's a way of life, making it worthwhile for most.

Thank You

Before you go, I want to warmly say "thank you" from the bottom of my heart! I realize that there are many e-books on the market and you decided to purchase this one so I am for ever grateful for that.

Thanks a million for reading this book all the way to very end!

If you enjoyed this book then I need your help!

Please take a moment to leave a review for this book after you turn the page.

This valuable feedback will allow me to write e-books that help you in your journey through life. And if you love it, please let me know.

Your Friend,

Dean Reid